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HOC OPVS

D. D.

ATHANASIVS GASKER



# AUTO-BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

## THE EDITOR.

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HE Commissioners of the Poor Laws will understand me, when I say, that I was Born at Putney, in Surrey. I repeat the name of my birth-place, "PUTNEY," without any angry feeling towards, but in defiance of the *Registration Committee*.

"To write lives," says a favourite author,\* proceeding to instance one of those singular productions which appeared at the close of the sixteenth century, "is, to extract, from catalogues of unknown motive, the features which specious idea has imposed upon such a base." I deny this: and I proceed to illustrate, in the sequel, my opinion.

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\* Mr. Gurton.

With regard to any seeming irregularity of expression, which failing memory may allow to insinuate itself into the texture of this brief sketch, I shall take no notice of any criticisms on this head. Impudence will ever exist in large communities of men ; and I hold it to be a prostitution of attention to make further remark upon the subject. Therefore, without announcement, without preface of any kind, to this part of my undertakings—

“ Nor drum, nor trumpet piloting approach,  
Nor gilded herald :—quiet as the morn  
Which leaves a peaceful bed for worlds of strife,  
I come—nor would I, for Golconda’s sand,  
No, nor for jewell’d Araby, my birth-right pawn  
For surfeits of ambition’s eminence.”

My Father was a poor, but a respected man—my Mother shared his sorrows and his dignity. I left my Father’s roof at an early age, in search of great truths in other lands. I did not find them ; and I returned to my paternal dwelling. My Father—he was dead :—my Mother—so was she :—and I went abroad again.

In thirty years of wandering : in visiting all the principal libraries of the world : residing in forty different monasteries in different countries : being member of most of the literary and philosophical societies of the world,—all those of Europe : communicating with all the eminent men of my time, by letter and by conversation :—with a mind ardent in proportion with the object of my re-

search—it may be conceived I became possessed of *knowledge*.

I am, now, a lonely, world-abandoned man: and I am thankful for that peaceful lot; and from my quiet home, furnished with books and bread, I look back, in imagination, towards my lost heritage, as the mausoleum where worth and greatness, side by side, lie in spangled shrouds;—where the moral blood of human kind is frozen:—and where hope is dead!

But to return—I have said, that I became possessed of knowledge. I did so, and when I consider the persecution which I have ever experienced, in the attempt at the communication of portions of the results of that knowledge to a benighted multitude, I marvel rather at the still youthful flow of anxious feeling, actuating me to suffer further persecution, in the publication of truth.

At Potsdam, as early as the year 1797, I was placed in a barrel of brown sugar, before the Royal Family of Prussia, that I might be rendered ridiculous, as being the author of my first principal literary production, “*On the Nature of Sounds*.” My whispering apparatus, which I had caused to be erected, at great personal expense and trouble, in the drawingroom of the royal residence, (and by which the queen was enabled to communicate with any individual of her domestics, without another person in the room being aware of the circumstance,) was destroyed, without my receiving back even

the metal of which the separate conductors were composed, because the queen had been discovered, in a freak of temper at being differed with by his majesty, to have suddenly counter-ordered some smoked goose, in preparation for his majesty's supper.

The only objection advanced by the court against my two folio volumes on sounds, was, an absurd suspicion of the king's, that, in my chapter on "simple relations," I alluded purposely to a stupid nephew of his, who rendered himself obnoxious to the head gardener of Sans Souci, by eating a bag of rare crocus bulbs, which he had left to dry on his trowsers, in the sun.

Being still under a species of arrest, even after the disgraceful insult which had been inflicted upon me at Potsdam, it was with considerable difficulty and inconvenience that I escaped from the clutches of my persecutors : owing my liberty to the kindness of my landlady, and being exposed to two hours of the night breeze of a northern climate, while I sat, with nothing to protect me but my shirt, across the roof of my lodging-house, to escape the scrutiny of the police.

Arriving, however, at Rostock, I embarked for London ; and, in a few days, ascended the Thames, with a favourable wind.

It would be vain to attempt to describe the anxiety which I constantly felt, to circumvent a fatality which seems indigenous to English literature, namely, the necessity of the antecedent notoriety of an author, and of



notoriety in the merest abstract, to bring attention to his productions, however valuable.

England, once the land of chivalry, has now long since become the land of commerce alone. Chivalry is extinct, and the love of truth, which, indirectly, gave birth to chivalry, seems to have receded still further back on the surface of our moral history. The English face is on principles of economy :—The English costume is on principles of economy :—England's affections are on principles of economy :—Her temples,—her religion is on principles of economy.

On my arrival in London, I paused to meditate on the nature and condition of truth, and the contingencies of honesty. I dwelt upon the treasure I felt, or fancied I possessed, and the means of communicating it to others. I saw the land of citizens and of merchandize in stirring activity and occupation ; and I considered how I might best arrest the passengers on the Broadway of life, and induce them to listen to my words.

Notoriety, I bethought me, must be my passport. And with a natural inclination to unostentatious quiet, and an aversion to every thing partaking of the ingredients adapted to the excitement of popular clamour, my dilemma may be well conceived, as I seated myself in my chamber, to strike out some stratagem whereby my need might be supplied.

My name was unknown in England ; and, although some degree of mystery had been attached to the name



of Athanasius Gasker, among the learned societies of Europe and America: still it was absolutely necessary, in England, to effect something, which, like the striking of a gong, should startle the attention of a fraction of the population, however small, towards my obscure character.

An expedient suggested itself. An attack upon the *Lord Mayor of London*.

I should mention, en passant, that the lodging in which I at present resided was situate in the immediate vicinage of an extensive charitable institution, containing a large free-school for boys, and an alms-house for destitute old women. Occasionally, I was in the habit of visiting the school, and conversing familiarly with the boys; and I had proffered medical advice, gratis, to the inmates of the alms-house, being at that time experimenting upon a new medical system which appeared at Alexandria. The system proved inefficacious, and the alms-house became nearly vacant; there remaining but three widows in the building, who were much attached to me, and exceedingly anxious to have tried upon them my curious medicines. Taking advantage, however, of the sentiments of these persons in my behalf, I suborned them to become accessaries to my design: and with the promise, also, of the assistance of the whole of the free-school, I proceeded to carry my project into execution.

Having purchased three gay and costly dresses for the widows, with head-dresses of plume, and having instructed a theatrical tailor to procure me a costume in

exact imitation of that of the Giants in Guildhall,—I issued some trifling pamphlets to secure the fidelity of my school-boy coadjutors, on whom I had, by oath, charged the profoundest secrecy.

Among the pamphlets which then appeared anonymously were—“*Barter and Loss lost and bartered; or, the Usher of St. Anne’s.*” “*Tare and Trett torn in pieces; or, the Everlasting Pie-woman betrayed.*” “*Double False Position; or, the Pot-bellied Head-Master in the Stocks.*”

The boys, ingratiated by these squibs upon their superiors, promised me the most unqualified allegiance, and it remained only to select opportunity for carrying my plan into effect.

On the 4th of July, 1799, the Lord Mayor was to be taken, in his state carriage, attended by the Chaplain and two Sheriffs, to dine with the Duke of Buckingham. The carriage, I learnt, was to pass along Holborn,—and I selected Holborn Hill as the scene of my experiment.

Having instructed the school-boys in my design, and having hired the largest and heaviest hackney-coach I could procure in London, the widows and myself, provided with four bolsters, in pink satin bags, seated ourselves in the carriage; and with a stout coachman in proper mourning, and the number of the coach removed, we proceeded slowly, from the western extremity of Holborn, to meet the Lord Mayor on his way from the city.

The state carriage appeared, on the opposite side of the hill, as *we* reached the summit of its *western* descent; and I then gave order to our driver to wait on the top of the hill, until the coach containing his Lordship, the Chaplain, and the two Sheriffs, should arrive at about the centre of the same declivity. The coach, slowly and stately ascending the hill, at length arrived at the point (*a few yards below St. Andrew's Church*) at which I thought it expedient to give order to our coachman to "*charge.*" Igniting, therefore, a quantity of gunpowder, which I had prepared on the roof, as also some squibs, protruded invisibly through the back, sides, and front of our carriage, I desired the driver to describe his line of attack; and, descending with violent rapidity, in an envelope of smoke, and with the squibs raging at all points, we came in contact with the state carriage, opposite the lower extremity of St. Andrew's Church-yard.

The impetus with which we descended (for I had loaded our conveyance with lead at the bottom, to give momentum to our approach,) caused us to strike with enormous violence against the side of the state carriage! the state carriage fell, shattered with the shock, and its inmates were confusedly disembogued in the road! the widows, who were much intoxicated with spirits which I had provided for the purpose, I now exhorted, incontinently to commence operations. The Chaplain was on his back, in the mud. The Lord Mayor was wrestling



with our coachman. The Sheriffs, who appeared to be persons of immense magnitude, were jammed backwards, with their knees brought towards their faces, in the woodwork of the back seats of the ruin. And the mob, at first only attracted by the circumstance, were now chiefly engaged in beating and robbing the footmen, and in carrying off the gilt ornaments of the dilapidated coach.

Of course nothing could have been more advantageous for my design. Entreating, therefore, the three widows to flail their bolsters about the disabled Sheriffs, and leaving our coachman to bring to his senses the Lord Mayor, upon whose face he had already contrived to seat himself, and to be turning round thereon in a pair of rough black trowsers, which I had especially ordered him to do, for reasons which will appear in the sequel: I myself whirled my pillow across the face of the Chaplain. The bolster burst: and the Chaplain's head, which was saturated with pomatum, became covered with feathers. With feathers in his mouth—with feathers in his eyes—with feathers from head to foot—the Chaplain raged in the road. The widows were incessant with the Sheriffs. The coachman never left the Lord Mayor. And while I, seizing the tails of the fat Chaplain's coat behind, kept him in a circle upon his toes, by swinging him from myself as a centre. My schoolboys, who had now assembled round, and were hurling *flowers and*

*tartlets*\* at the group in general, shouted Vengeance—Vengeance—on the diabolical authorities of the city. Athanasius Gasker for ever!

Being now taken, as a matter of course, to the office of the police, my object was, in the first place, to exculpate as much as possible *the widows*; and, secondly, to allow my design to produce its simplest result with reference to *myself*. Being allowed permission to speak, I addressed the magistrate in language sufficiently mysterious to mislead stupidity, but in phraseology sufficiently plain to appear consecutive. The magistrate listened, I observed, attentively, and with gravity; and when I concluded my address by saying, "*You, who have but to commence the execution of your office, by that dissuasion, which leading to the abrogation of a cause, produces, by its reversion, a national benefit: need not me to tell you of the direct operation of justice, or the misgivings of a barbarous people;*" turning to his brother magistrate, and indicating, by the expression of his countenance, a semblance of satisfaction, he whispered, "Sir John, this man is evidently no fool! But, religious enthusiasm, you see, sir!" "Yes," replied the other; "Yes!" And then they stared at one another, and whispered again some words which I could not catch: and I was sentenced to Newgate for a month.

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\* In allusion to the commemorations of the death of Anaxagoras.



My object was now attained ; i. e. the first step was taken towards the commencement of a design, which, from my earliest youth, I aimed at the accomplishment of ; and, on which, I may almost say, the intuitive hope of my childhood hung. It was the elucidation of Truth ! And now, while I make use of this expression, I can almost feel the chill, which, at that early time came over me, as I endeavoured to interpret, to my few companions, the crude sentiment and feeling I then possessed, and which never met a sympathy ; that chill returns as I think I hear the vague queries of those into whose hands my present work may fall, and, as I think I see the open stare,—or, perhaps, the vulgar grin of their misunderstanding.

I may not, in this place, stay to throw further light on what I mean by the “*Elucidation of Truth.*” Suffice it to say, I mean not anything bearing even relation to that which would be understood from these words in the popular cant of these receding times.—No—I am not popular—I must expect to be unpopular. And as the cock-crow to the sluggard, proves but an unwelcome sound, so my voice, to the somnambulism of this day, *must* be as the tone which true philosophy, in every age, has seemed to speak to those who were slumbering in their bigotry, and who could scarcely turn to grunt a condemnation against the proclaimers of an approaching dawn ! Aye, and Alas ! sleep on ! the Night is far spent ! and, in the sweet indices which I contemplate,

I know that Morning is near! Morning to that darkness which ye embrace as ye sleep! Twilight to thee, thou benighted World!

David, my youthful musings told me, did great things when young. Pompey, methought, accomplished much at an early age. So also did Alexander. And Hannibal, at six and twenty, succeeded Asdrubal against Rome.

Great things, I used to say, accrue to small beginnings. Abdollah, Mahomet's father, died when Mahomet was but two months old. He left five camels, and an Æthiopian female slave, to his widow and his son. At twenty-five, Mahomet married the rich widow of a citizen of Mecca, and Mahomet's fortune followed.\* Such thoughts were mine, as I left my Father's roof, to go upon that pilgrimage, which I have now concluded, so much to my own content, and, I trust, to the advantage of others.

The first work, however, to return to my sketch, which I gave to the world on my release from prison—and which I considered as part of the alphabet of my Great System:—the commencement, as it were, of the publication of my great principal design:—was my “TENEBRÆ; OR, THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE.” (6 vols. fol. Lond. 1799.) This work was suppressed. *It will appear again, shortly, in the same form.*

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\* Abul Feda. Vit. Mohamm.



Seneca remarks : " Veniet tempus quo ista quæ nunc latent in lucem dies extrahet ; et longioris ævi diligentia, veniet tempus quo posterì nostri tam aperta nos nescisse mirentur."

From want of due meditation on the origin of idea, we become entangled in enormous errors ; and in the erection of our unwieldy systems, " we fare as did the builders in the plains of Senaar : we fall into a confusion of languages, and neither understand one another, nor are understood by the rest of mankind."

" In every proposition," says Mr. Hobbes, " be it affirmative or negative, the latter appellation either comprehendeth the former, as in this proposition, Charity is a virtue, the name of virtue comprehendeth the name of charity and many other virtues beside : and then is the proposition said to be true or *truth* : for truth and a true proposition is all one. Or else the latter appellation comprehendeth not the former : as in this proposition every man is just ; the name of just comprehendeth not every man ; for unjust is the name of the far greater part of men : and the proposition is said to be false, or falsity. Falsity and a false proposition being also the same thing.\*

I do not stop to make comment on this, but I quote it as allusive to the sentiments of a date, whose characters, collaterally only, bear on our anticipations.

The Clergy becoming acquainted with the appearance

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\* Hum. Nat.



of my "*Tenebræ*," summoned a secret convocation. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishops of London, Winchester, Carlisle, Chester, and others were present: with a vast number of the subordinate Clergy. The meeting took place, to secure privacy, in the cellars of the London Docks; whither, so important was my work considered, the Clergy were conveyed, in disguises male and female, in the barges of the corporation of London: under pretext of the company's going, on evening parties of pleasure, down the river. It being so arranged, that the barges should not arrive at the Docks until after dark: to allow of the parties being admitted unseen.

I was fortunate enough to become apprized of the circumstance of this meeting, previous to its occurrence; and that in rather a singular manner. At Cairo, in the year 1780, while I was busied in the attempt at instituting a College on my own system, I became acquainted with a Jewish merchant, who resided there, and who was a person of considerable distinction. Ezekiel Noph was my friend's name. He now resided in Lothbury; and he was at this time kindly negotiating a transaction for me, concerning some oriental and other manuscripts, which I had purchased, and left behind me at Cairo.

This person was also intimate with a gentleman connected with the Docks, an importer of Shiraz wine, and whom I had met at my friend's table.

Through this channel I became acquainted with the

circumstance : and I was enabled by the exertions of my friend, strange to say, to become witness of the singular scene. Singular, I say, not that my experience had left me much capacity of marvel, but that the exhibition was singular, as being so marked an exemplification of the excess of a principle, which my *Life*, I may say, is, and ever has been, to expose.

I hold the Clergy to be the most extraordinary class of men in this country. They are not ignorant. On the contrary, they know too little. Their knowledge is limited by a circumference, whose radius is so small, that they know almost everything ; almost everything, that is, within that small circumference. There is the mischief ! There is the evil ! There is the source of infinite calamity. Aye, of infinite calamity, dispersing itself perennially from this small seminal circle, the Poppy-Head of the Church.

But, however, I have stated that I was enabled through the kindness and exertion of my friend, Ezekiel Noph, to be a witness of the scene. *I was an eye-witness of the secret assembly of the Clergy, in 1799, who met, at the London Docks, to pass opinion on my book !*

The members of that assembly, who are now living, may step forward, if they will, in "their honorable age," to vouch for the truth of the statement I am about to make, by denying the facts which I mention.

It was on the night of the 14th of September, 1799, I was informed the meeting would take place.

Early in the afternoon of the 14th, I was admitted, through the intercession of my friend with the Shiraz Merchant, to be secreted in an advantageous situation in the warehouse, or cellar, in which the assembly was to be held.

In order to avoid notice being excited, little preparation was visible for the reception of so important a multitude, as that about to consecrate anew this Temple of Bacchus, by their august presence in the evening. Small tubs, in considerable profusion, were scattered in orderly disorder here and there ;—and, I should say, an unusual number of trucks, or hand-carriages for barrels, had taken up their abode in the warehouse. But there was nothing to call forth either curiosity, or inquiry, from the usual daily visitors to the cellar. The small tubs, I was informed, were for the reception of that part of the superior Clergy designed to form antitheses to their heads ;—the trucks, about four inches from the ground, were to be graced with the meditative positions of the inferior Clergy.

The only thing which could possibly attract the notice of a stranger, or one unadvised of the plot, was, the elevation of an enormous hogshead-cask, *apud penitimos recessus*, at the extreme end of the cellar, and placed in a central conspicuous situation, which, I was informed, was intended for the chair of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A thought at once occurred to me. The Archbishop, doubtless, will be placed in such a



situation, as to command full view of the whole assembly. What expedient, therefore, better for the full satisfaction of my purpose, than to place myself in the interior of the throne, on which His Grace would be mounted above? The cask could be so arranged, as to admit audience of His Grace's developement of the case, as well as of the arguments brought forward, pro or con, by other members of the synod; while the removal of the bung from the front, would admit full view of the whole assembly.

Accordingly, it was at once agreed, that the interior of the hogshead should be the situation from whence I should witness the decisions of the Church, assembled in secret, on the subject of my book.

At five o'clock, P.M. the doors of the warehouse were closed to the public: and I had opportunity, with the assistance of my friends, to make a few preparations for my interesting and curious adventure; interesting to me, as I was anxious to see the mode in which Ecclesiastical indignation would explode over the pages of my work, and the more so, as the substance of those pages had less real reference to the Church and the objects of its defence, than the arguments of its representatives could have to the shadows which they attacked.

However, I made preparation for the evening. Two or three articles placed in the hogshead: some sailors assembled in a large empty vat at the end of the apartment, with a few things which I instructed them how and when to make use of, constituted the sum of the

arrangements, which I had conceived might prove expedient to complete the result and effect, as it were, of the theologico-polemical masquerade ; with the exception of six very fine and large macaws, which I had bought, and caused to have their beaks so adjusted, as that they should make no noise during the discussion, and directed, that these also should be placed, in a sack, with me in the hogshead.

At seven o'clock, giving my last instruction to the sailors, and leaving my friend Noph, and the Shiraz merchant, concealed with them, to forward punctuality in their obedience to my directions : for the first time in my life, I enacted the part of Diogenes ; soon to have one greater than Alexander to honour me by his proximity ! I was just in time : for no sooner had I well seated myself, with my eye on a proper level with the umbilical eye of my observatory, and my macaws, &c. &c. stowed quietly beside me, than I heard the clatter of a number of loud voices evidently approaching the warehouse. Soon was the door of the warehouse violently burst open, as it were, when I saw by the lamps which had been suspended for the assembly from the ceiling, a group of women of enormous bulk and stature, arrayed in the most sumptuous dresses, stalk in, with a waving, pompous, and slow step towards my end of the apartment. I kept my eye fixed upon these figures, in order to ascertain the reality of the different characters, and their situation in the room, previous to the opening



of the debate. These were the Bishops! And had there been as many furies as individuals, who composed this leading group, a classical imagination might have well conceived, that they had now become re-incarnate in the persons of alderman's wives, to witness with horrid delight the ensuing spectacle. The Archbishop of Canterbury then appeared, in his robes of office: and handing to an attendant a large cloak, which he had worn to conceal his Archiepiscopal costume, he joined the former group. The Clergy had now also nearly filled the room, when each taking, from a green bag which he carried, his canonical gown, cassock, &c. these were placed *over* the disguises in which they appeared on the barge; that the assembly might, during the debate, wear something of an ecclesiastical appearance.

A few forms now being read, and some ceremonies gone through, which I did not understand, orders were given, by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, for the company to be seated. And accordingly, while his Grace ascended the throne in which I was concealed, the Bishops took their seats on the small tubs near him: and the rest of the crowd were shortly settled on a variety of implements, which, as I mentioned, were strewn about the floor of the cellar. A wheelbarrow now appeared, illuminated by eight tall wax lights, in branches from its sides: in which an individual in the dress of a verger, with a red circle worked upon his vest, before and behind, was wheeling the fated folios!

Having brought the vehicle to the foot of his Grace's throne, this person was ordered to halt ; and my work, (surrounded with the enormous candles, such as are used at the altars of cathedral churches, in a wheelbarrow covered with black velvet, and decorated with numerous symbolical designs, most exquisitely worked in gold,) was placed immediately opposite the bung-hole of the cask.

Little thought the reverend sage who was perched upon the summit of the tub, and who now prepared to address the multitude, whose eye accompanied his own, in glances at those folios ! His Grace, however, thus began :—

“ Reverend brethren—It is with solemn regret—[interrupted by cries of hear, hear]—It is with solemn regret, and feelings of the deepest anxiety, that I am called upon to address you upon this most important, most trying, most extraordinary, and, indeed, I may say, most unparalleled occasion in the History of the Church [cries of hear, hear.]—(*Aside*) Mr. Talboys, that lamp behind Dr. Allnut ! really that I should be obliged !”

(*Another voice.*) “ Yes ! yes !”

(*Another voice.*) “ No ! no !”

(*Another voice.*) “ Flagrant ! flagrant !”

(*Another voice.*) “ Disgraceful !”

(*Archbishop proceeds.*) “ It is with solemn regret, that I address you upon this occasion ; because, being too well aware, as, indeed, I feel conscious every one of

my reverend coadjutors must also be, of the proneness of many, in these critical times, to attach an undue importance, or even a misinterpretation, to minutiae, which, an affectionate interest in the national welfare, through the influences of an undisturbed piety, may deem it expedient to rank among the necessities which our exigence demands:—Being deeply, my reverend brethren, and bitterly imbued with this conviction, I say I address you with regret, and with anxiety, lest the measures which I have adopted, with the consent, and indeed with the advice of my learned brethren of the bench, on my right hand and on my left, [*motions, and noises of acknowledgment from the bishops,*] should, by escaping from the secrecy in which as yet I trust they remain, meet with the disapprobation, nay, perhaps the ridicule of unbiassed persons.—[*Cries of Oh! Er, Er! in point of fact—Er Er Er rrrrrrrrr*]. [*Cries of order, order.*] Proceeding to the subject of our meeting, my reverend brethren, allow me to call your attention to a work, which has lately issued from the press, in six volumes, folio, entitled the ‘*Tenebræ, or the Invisible Visible.*’ The work is anonymous;—and it appears unlikely, as yet, that the name of its author will become known. (*Aside*), Mr. Belton—wheel the book round.—(*Proceeds.*) You will observe, my reverend and learned brethren, that the work is one of considerable extent: and I must add my painful conviction, that it is fraught with mischief more than proportional to its bulk.



“ You will observe, (*here one of the Bishops was very sick, and obliged to be carried out to the quay. I did not hear what became of him.*) You will observe,” proceeded His Grace, “ that the work treats of a variety of subjects : and, while I confess, without hesitation, or rather while I declare the total and complete unintelligibility of every page, nay, every line of that book : I have confidence in the reliance upon the judgment and the sincerity of every member of this assembly, in the assurance, that they will agree with me, in pronouncing, as I do now, and that in the most unequivocal and unaffected language, that every page, every line, every word, every syllable, nay, every letter of that book—(it is obvious, my reverend brethren, from the manner in which they are place in the *types*)—is fraught with mischief against the Church and State :—is pregnant with insinuations against our national rights :—is aimed at the sanctity of our faith, and the security of our hearths and of our homes !” [*Cries of hear, hear, hear, hear !—reiterated applause—and cries of “ wheel round the book—wheel round the book !”*]

—His Grace, then having made an astonishing noise in clearing his throat, thus proceeded :

“ I refer you, my reverend brethren, to page 240 of the 4th volume, where the author would fain have it appear, that he begins to draw his conclusions from the preceding arguments. At line 19 he observes—(*reading from a paper*)—‘ Principles, therefore, whether so called of science or of conscience, of physics or of metaphysics,

of logic or of theologic reasoning,—nay, even of common or mere numeric harmony, are in themselves contradictions; (*pompously*) For even in the last and simplest results of nature, or in the more second and complicated causations, or, à fortiori, ascending still higher, in the complete indefinite, or, as it has been phrased, “*in loco locorum quasi inertâ origine rerum*,”\* here we find the same ambiguity, not only of circumstance and position, but also of primal agency:—so that to allege, affirm, or declare the positive, or even the negative ratio, or proportions of any set of contingencies, with their relative and absolute velocities in Time, necessary towards the full developement of the proposition:—is to announce a contradiction; or, in other words, to say that the *end* is before the beginning:—which is absurd. Therefore, I say, that, principles whether so called of science or of conscience, of physics or of metaphysics, of logic or of theologic reasoning,—nay, even of common or mere numeric harmony, are in themselves contradictions!”—*[Pauses.]*

“Now, my reverend and learned brethren, I do maintain, that this passage—(and, I must be allowed to mention, that it is but one out of a thousand such, in this monstrous book,) I do maintain, and I trust my convictions, forcible as they are, will find a sympathy in the hearts of many of those assembled here, that this passage

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\* Canet. Fris. Aland. lib. vi.

is, in itself, and alone sufficient to condemn eternally the book from whence it is taken, and amply sufficient to prove to you the disastrous tendency of the experiment, of allowing this book to circulate among the people of this country." [*Cries of hear, hear ; and the manifestation of the evident and entire acquiescence of the majority.*]

A gentleman, in a female costume, however, arose to address the assembly ; who, as he is now living and in possession of considerable honour and emolument in the Church, will not be mentioned by name.—He thus addressed the assembly :—

" Learned and beloved brethren—In an emergency like the present, it may seem ill to become one of the humble station which I hold among you, and one of far more humble literary celebrity, to offer any remarks upon the critical and extraordinary circumstance, which has brought us together this evening.

" A sense of duty, however, arising out of, I trust, a pardonable conceit, which attention to the subject has procured me, induces me to beg permission, to offer a few suggestions, towards the elucidation of the passage which has been just read. [*Cries of hear, hear, hear.*] And first with regard to '*principles.*' In contemplating such a passage as the one before us, (*opens the book*) and, first, making use of a grand general division of mental resolutions, into dogmatical, sceptical, and academical, it seems to me that we are led to the author's



intent, prospectively, by bringing to bear the Hypotyposes Pyrrhoneæ upon the mediate, and, as it were, reflected interpretation of the understood antithesis.

“ Because, opposing phenomena, and things intelligible, in every conceivable way ; we proceed through the equivalence of contrary things, ay, and words too, first to suspense of judgment, next to negative alliance or comfort.

“ The differences of generations—the eye oblong, or round,—convex, or concave :—the shape of the ear :—a cold in the head :—length, or shortness of nose :—roughness, or smoothness of tongue :—diversities of stomach :—these are ‘ simplicities ’ forbidding demonstration.

“ Again, The colours of men differ. We are to be found in White, in Black, in Yellow, in Red, and in Brown. Our forms and statures differ :—from the Calmuck of Thibet and Bucharica, to the inhabitant of Circassia and Georgia :—from the Esquimaux of Hudson’s Bay, to the Giant of Patagonia.

“ We also differ in other matters. Some can digest one thing, some another. Demophon was cold in the sun, and hot in the shade.—Athenagoras felt no inconvenience from the bite of venomous reptiles.—The people who live on the banks of the Hydaspes eat scorpions.—Rufinius of Chalcis could drink Hellebore without being sick.—Chrisermus the Herophillican could eat no pepper.

—Soterius the surgeon did not like the smell of fish.—  
Tiberius Cæsar could see in the dark.—In short,—

‘Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum  
Collegisse juvat; metaque fervidis  
Evitata rotis, palmaque nobilis  
Terrarum dominos evehit ad Deos.—  
Hunc si mobilium turba Quiritium  
Certat tergeminis tollere honoribus :  
Illum si proprio condidit horreo  
Quidquid de Libycis verritur, areis :’—  
    &c.      &c.      &c.

“And we all recollect, my learned brethren, the little epigrammatic allusion to the idiosyncrasies of the late master of a well known academy, the Rev. Dr. Sprat and his amiable lady :—and, on such grounds, we certainly must allow, that, in consideration of appetitions and aversions, affections and repugnances, and the impossibility of the annihilation of the circumference of assent, suspensions are inducible, even at the violation of first principles.” [*Hissing, and cries of Oh !*]

A gentleman in a three-cornered hat, and wearing very short petticoats, having now elevated himself on the tub which had served him for a seat—(the Rev. Dr. Crotch, as I was afterwards informed,) proceeded to address the meeting from the opposite side of the apartment :—

“Learned and reverend Brethren :—Having ever had the most distinct, and even I may say peculiar aversion,

to every thing connected with the history, and the tenets, of the Eleatic School: my impatience may be borne with while I say, that I hold forth the confession of an *Ænesidemus*, as an index to that wholesome disgust, which even the follower of *Pyrrho* was unable to stifle, as he proclaimed the definition of that philosophy, (*viz.* *Pyrrhonism*,) to be the recollection of opinions embraced upon the testimony of the senses, or upon any other evidence, by means of which one dogma is compared with another, and all, upon the comparison, are found to be useless and full of confusion!

“Gentlemen!—I grieve over the waste of erudition and talent, which has been spent upon speculations like these!—Gentlemen, forgive me, while I obtrude myself upon your attention for an instant, not as a scholar, not as a rhetorician, not as one versed in the dialectics or the sophistry of either ancient or modern times, but as a man of plain views, and a follower of matters of fact!

“It concerneth not me, gentlemen, as a clergyman in a remote district, and moving among an agricultural population, it concerneth not me to consider the properties of *Euphorbium*, to classify the animalcules in rain-water, or to meditate on the habits of the sea horse!

“I deny nothing, gentlemen!—and, waking or sleeping,—in motion or in rest,—hungry or thirsty,—fearing,—hoping,—grieving,—I love my king, gentlemen!—*[hear, hear, hear, and cheers.]*

“The distance of places, one from the other, matters

not to me, gentlemen: nor do I take heed whether I be a million of miles from Kamsckatka, or two from Otaheite! [*heax, hear, hear.*]

“ I am a man of plain facts, gentlemen! and although I have had the jaundice seven times, the world is not yellow to me.—And, although I have no relations, I am a happier, ay, a better man, possibly, than those who have.—[*Cries of question.*]

“ And, therefore, I say, gentlemen, (*energetically*) it appears to me, that notwithstanding the mischievous tendency of this book, notwithstanding the obvious allusions contained in the passage which His Grace has condescended to read to us this evening, and on which my learned brother has so ably expatiated:—I think, that notwithstanding these considerations, important unquestionably in themselves;—if this book contain some hidden truth, our attempts may be frustrated in opposing its progress;—while, as

‘ *Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat.*’

So, if it be an error, it will fall of itself.”

The Archbishop of Canterbury was here about to interrupt the Doctor: when I, (whose patience had been long exhausted in listening to these persons, having previously to the meeting bored with a gimlet a considerable aperture in the head of the cask in which I sat, and also having contrived that the head would take out without difficulty, being pushed from underneath,) thrust an



exceedingly long and sharp packing-needle upwards through the aperture in the lid, into that part of the Archbishop which was by necessity the most contiguous.

The pain created, doubtless acute for the moment, caused the Archbishop to roar out with the most tremendous cry, while he extended his arms and legs in every direction, in right lines as far as possible from his body !

The consternation, the instantaneous confusion of the whole assembly, can neither be imagined nor described ! The alarmed priests, deeming their leader possessed, (or something equivalent,) sprung across the tubs, and across each other fallen among the tubs, in every direction !

The screams of the Archbishop, (still revolving on the packing-needle,) were the signal to the sailors in the vat at the end of the cellar to commence the most diabolical noises ! The Archbishop, now, being dragged from his throne by three of the Bishops, who were carrying him through the tumult, enabled me to knock off the head of the cask, and to let loose the macaws. The macaws flew screeching at the lamps ; and breaking to atoms the glass globes, extinguished every light ; when, now, by the flashes of some mock lightning which I had entrusted the sailors with, and whom I had previously accoutred as nearly in the likeness of demons as possible,—accompanied by the rolling of thunder, executed admirably by Noph and the Shiraz merchant with a



sheet of copper and some shot in the large vat,—I was to be indistinctly seen, with an inverted dim flambeau in one hand, and a large pitch-fork in the other, standing, in my usual costume, upon my work in the wheelbarrow, as the terrified convocation escaped.

Noph and myself repaired to the house of the Shiraz merchant : where we spent the remainder of the evening.\* It certainly appears striking, to our incipient meditations, how men can so blind themselves, as to suppose, that by measures of this nature, whether public or private, they can ever contribute to their own professional aggrandizement, as a body corporate, or, by reflection, to the advantage of any community at large.

And, here I would add, for it occurs forcibly to me as I write, and while I consider the state of the public mind at present ; it is probable, the reader may imagine, that, not only in the selection of the incidents, occurrences, and adventures of my past life, for purposes of my present narrative, but also in the past motives and undertakings, which brought about, or placed me in the way of those occurrences, my habit has been to seek for what is termed the ludicrous and the antithetical, rather than those more substantial forms, which, while they so

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\* The circumstance of this extraordinary meeting of the Clergy has never been alluded to in print until now, except by intimation in a number of the Ladies' Magazine, which was published shortly after it took place.

far more efficiently exhibit and support, so much more graciously and invitingly attend upon the sacred cause of Truth.

I wish, however, to disabuse my reader of his liability to so erroneous an impression.

Athanasius Gasker, alas ! indeed, is innocent of many smiles. And although the philosophy of him who indites these pages, far from embittering the hope, or sullyng the consciousness, of this the autumn of his passing life : though the whisper of his recollection and his dream be “musical as is Apollo’s lute ;” yet, from the face of pale Inquiry, he has caught no smile : nor has deep Wisdom ever seemed to laugh to him ! And if the low way of knowledge, on which he has been so long a pilgrim, bore him so near the earth, as to imprint his mother’s face in his : so let it be ; and let him wear the sombre and mysterious frown, which Earth, in her undress, and sacred beauty wore, to him who searched her secrets.

It was not I who formed either the project of my life, or the exigencies which have attended it. I neither sought, nor chose the supply of those exigencies, but as the necessity of the case demanded ; and it would be more than madness for me, now to endeavour to trace their remote causes, or even the circumstances which brought them into immediate play.

Suffice it to say : to the world I am indebted for the principal outline which has marked the colouring of my

chequered life. To the public mind I am indebted for the necessity of the adoption of those measures, towards the completion of the design which I have had in view, which, now, that same mind would fain contemplate as ridiculous—

*“ Modo huc, modo flectitur illuc.”*

It is time, however, that my sketch should be drawing towards its close : and, indeed, its object will be completed, by the addition of a few other circumstances, which I should consider it an injustice to omit ; an injustice to myself, as throwing a veil over some of my principal exertions : an injustice to the public at large, and especially to some parti-portions of it, as holding back this humble effort of paying tribute to that public, by reannouncing the fame of their persecutions of me.\*

In the year 1802, I published a small work in duodecimo, 3 vols. entitled, “ *The Sexes of Facts, or the Economy of Discussion.*” It is interesting to look back on the effect that work produced.

At Kensington, at this time, there was a very large

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\* At the same time, I cannot waive this opportunity of returning my most sincere and unaffected thanks, to the Merchants of London,—to the Members of the Inner Temple,—to the Patrons of the Orphan Asylum,—to the President and Fellows of the Royal Society,—and, as individuals, to the late Dr. Priestley,—to the late Dr. Jenner,—to the present Commander of the Forces,—and to Mrs. Gurley, of Edmonton,—for their kind and humane interference in 1802.



boarding-school, or academy for young ladies, much patronized by a considerable portion of the nobility and gentry: but, especially, by a particular class of these, which, indeed, I should be far from willing to point at, in any way offensively, by designating them according to the nomenclature of any vulgar distinctions; but I am compelled, in order to the elucidation of my tale, to make use of an epithet, (I am sure without wish of giving offence,) which, in the imperfect parlance of society, is adopted in describing one great class of English people, in contradiction with the other: I mean, the epithet—"strict."

The Lady Patronesses of Pedaster House Academy were then, to make myself intelligible, of the "stricter" order of society. The Mistress, as a matter of course, was strictness itself. The Governesses, to use the phrase of one of the advertisements published formerly for the establishment, and which I have now in my possession, were—"none but GENUINE WOMEN."—The Mansion stood—"in a moral point of view."—The Domestics were—"persons of PRINCIPLE."—And the Gardens and Pleasure Ground were laid out—"with a view to the ONE GREAT END!"\*

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\* It is needless to comment upon that which we do not understand. But, although "*de quibus ignoras tace*," be a maxim of profound wisdom: "*de quibus certus es loquere opportune*" is an injunction of perhaps equal value. I therefore annex this note to state my most unqualified ignorance of the meaning of these phrases.



It was not long after I had made known, through the medium of the journals of the day, my intention of giving a course of public lectures, on "the Sexes of Facts, and the Economy of Discussion," at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, that three of the Lady Patronesses of this distinguished Academy honoured me with a visit, at my residence in Panton Square: requesting me to deliver a private course at Pedaster House.

I acceded to their proposition. And on the evening of the 6th of May, the Anniversary of the Battle of Prague, accompanied by Lady Agnes Barnaby, Lady Letitia Grogram, and Mrs. Mirsk, I drove down in my carriage to deliver my first lecture.

How different are the feelings, I thought, as we rolled along, in the serene evening air, past the dull wall of the park:—(Lady Agnes, asleep:—Mrs. Mirsk, smiling at her own thoughts:—and Lady Letitia, whisking the gnats with the tassels of her reticule;—) How different my situation, at present, from that, in which I was taken by an armed escort, to lecture upon the same subject, before the Emperor Paul, at St. Petersburg!

Notwithstanding the persecutions which I had experienced, I could not, at this moment, resist indulging a grateful reflection, on the comparative freedom of knowledge in this country, when considered in reference to others in which I had resided. So flattered, indeed, did I feel, by the attention of my fair fellow-travellers, that, had it not been for their seniority, and the more becoming

costume in which they exhibited themselves, I might have composed a complimentary Ode, on the subject of that evening's excursion, entitled, "Mercury escorted by the Graces to the temple of Truth."

My musings, however, were interrupted, as it was now just becoming dusk,—by Lady Barnaby's suddenly springing from her seat, in order to thrust her head out of the window, and while Mrs. Mirsk and Lady Grogam seized fast hold of the hinder part of her dress, lest the carriage door should fly open,—by her screaming out to the coachman, in a shrill and menacing tone—"How dare you drive round the grass plot to the left, sir? Back—Back—let the consequences be what they may! Yes—Back, sir! you know it makes me sick to go this way round, and that is the reason you do it!" Then, receding hastily into the carriage, and in so doing striking the crown of her head violently against the roof, which accident she seemed to wish should pass unnoticed, she once more seated herself: while we were shaken, and lifted, backwards, and forwards, and sideways, among the laurel-bushes, until we reached the lighted hall-door of the mansion.

My servant, who had travelled with me nearly all over the world, of course, paid as little attention as I did to Lady Barnaby's indisposition: and we were soon landed in the hall.

I now made enquiry, as to what arrangement had been made for my reception. And finding everything



conveniently prepared, in a very capacious dining room, reaching, as I observed, from one side of the mansion to the other, and having at one end raised benches for an audience, and, at the other, an extremely advantageous recess, backed by a large bow window, and separated from the remainder of the apartment by tall and handsome columns : I gave directions to my servant to bring in and unpack the machinery, while I paid my respects to the Mistress of the establishment.

“ Mr. Gasker ”—was then sounded from one footman to another placed on the landing places of a very superb old fashioned stair-case : “ Mr. Gasker ”—and again—“ Mr. Gasker ”—until I had reached the door of the drawing room : when for the last time, in a still louder tone,—“ Mr. Gasker ”—was shouted, over the buzz and hum of a very crowded room.

Being considerably taller than the common standard of men, and measuring six feet four inches from the naked sole, my appearance at once attracted the gaze and curiosity of a considerable portion of the assembly; as I made my bow to Mrs. Earlygrave, the Mistress of the Academy.

A short sallow-complexioned looking person, aged about five-and-forty, with light-coloured hair bound fast back across her temples, small intelligent eyes, a turban with the highest plume of ostrich feathers I have ever seen in my life, and a yellow velvet dress—was Mrs. Earlygrave !



I was pleased to make the acquaintance of so eminent a personage ; and having passed the usual routine of compliment and phrase reciprocation, and verging on the subject of the ensuing Lecture, the attention of the room was suddenly called to a concerto of Corelli, to be performed on twenty-six octave flutes, by the parlour boarders of the establishment, while my servant announced to me that the machinery was in readiness.\*

Taking advantage of the opportunity, I descended to make ready the Lecture-room : and, in less than half an hour, having everything in order, I gave directions that the company should be apprized of it.

The reader may probably have experienced a feeling of surprise, not unmixed with curiosity, at finding mention made of any machinery as requisite, towards the illustration of such a subject, as the “ Economy of Discussion.”

But the fact is, that feeling perfectly conscious, as I did, of the extreme importance of my theme, and, as a matter of course of the attractive interest in which it would appear to be enveloped, to the masculine and experienced meditations of an advanced philosophy ;—nevertheless, I perceived plainly the dilemma in which I was placed, as I considered in my mind the difficulty which would necessarily attend upon my endeavours to

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\* See “ Reminiscences of Kensington : ” written, I understand, by the Lady of an eminent speaker at the Bar.

impart to the minds of a juvenile, and, *à fortiori*, a female juvenile audience, the high import of the subject in question.

Accordingly, to obviate this difficulty, I prepared a very large phantasmagorea, made a present to me by the King of Sweden, to represent, by means of pictorial, combined with more strictly termed optical illusions, the beauty, the immensity, and the imposing historical grandeur, so to speak of this curious, and as yet but partially elucidated topic. And, selecting some of the most striking features, as they appeared to me, from the illimitable expanse, as it were, of matter before me: I so arranged them, as I thought, as, in the most direct and immediate manner, to force themselves, with the more primary inductions pendent from them, upon the minds of youth.

The room being darkened, and the company properly disposed and seated, as my servant had now informed me: I proceeded to ignite the large lamps which were placed behind the lens, while the servant arranged the gauzes and the rest of the machinery, preparatory to my throwing out my more early and primary "families of reality."

As one of the simplest, and most obvious forms assumed by the truth of my system, I selected—"the workmen employed in the erection of the Tower of Babel."

Having contrived to procure a very splendid painting



on glass, representative of the tower, executed by a relation of the late Mr. Jarvis, and inserting this first;—by means of the superposition of a second slide, over that on which the elevation of the naked tower was painted, I was enabled to introduce the “male fact,” of the ascent and descent of the builders on the great spiral staircase of the structure;—while, at the same time, I caused to be imitated, by means of a beautiful little machine, made a present to me by the late Dr. Wollaston, the sound of distant wedding bells, continuing as the figures moved upwards and downwards on the tower.

Diminishing, then, the light, by slow degrees, so as to make the illusion to become gradually less and less visible, until darkness had, for a few seconds, taken the place of the aerial picture; suddenly, and accompanied by a loud report, followed by the roll of distant thunder, and the peeling of the same church-bells, I caused to appear, in the air of the apartment, as it were, the illuminated form of an enormous *Screw*:—the screw having been, in fact, introduced, by the descendants of Ham, soon after the dispersion of Babel, notwithstanding the contradictory statements of several historians.\*

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\* See Bryant's *Anc. Myth.* Sir W. Drummond's *Origines. Scientia Sinensis*, Paris, 1687. Hyde *Hist. Vet. Pers. &c. &c. &c.*

The earliest laws with reference to the poor were written on pieces of wood carved in spiral furrows, which contained the hieroglyphics of primitive charity. A gentleman, a friend of mine in Yorkshire, has the whole of the present new poor law act engraved on a vast marble screw, which is erected on the lawn in the front of his house.



The early signification, and several properties of numbers, are now so little understood, that, I purpose assigning a portion of "the Library" which is now in preparation for the press, to the elucidation of this interesting subject. I shall not, therefore, and indeed my space will not allow me here, more than to allude to the curious intricacies, and striking results of this theory.

Numbers, however, are facts:—facts of the most positive and pure order. And however D'Alembert and the French Encyclopædists, or their followers may smile, in their ignorance, upon this subject: the time is not far distant, when the decent satisfaction of the present scientific world may experience a disturbance little anticipated either as to its origin, its nature, or its extent, with reference to the full scope of more than one, so called, "frightful hypothesis."\*

However, my first illustrative picture, as also the explanation which I afforded to it, being received with, indeed, a grateful intelligence, I proceeded to represent another similar illusion, conveying some idea of that part of my system relating to the sexual properties of numbers.

Numbers, as I have before observed, are facts.—And it is a circumstance but little known, comparatively, now, that the sign made use of in numerical calculation, to represent nought, or nothing, not anything, or non-

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\* These are *not* the words of Mr. Babbage. Lincoln's Inn, April 4.

existence, the small circle, or more properly oval, or letter O, made use of for this purpose, is, in point of fact, the great mundane egg of classical mythology, produced by night in the bosom of Erebus.\* It is the oval formed by the nuptial relationship of the Great Father and the Great Mother, which contained, as it were, the non-existent universe.† It expresses that which we denominate “nothing,” but, which in truth contains everything;—everything, that is, but *itself*: which also was the beginning, and therefore before itself: the idea of which, being too difficult for our finite comprehensions, gave rise to the phrase of “arguing in a circle, or oval,” meaning argument tending to nothing, or contained in nothing, or, in other words, “nothing.”

But, as it is obvious that there never was a time when there was nothing; as, upon such an hypothesis, nothing must have created something, or something must have created itself; which, if it be not an impossible, at least is a difficult conception; therefore it is also manifest, that there was always something:—and the symbol made use of to signify nothing signifies not only something, but that which contains “everything,” or to speak more strictly, everything in a state of “non-existence,” so called. And the oval, to which vulgar minds

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\* Orp. Hymn.

† For which reason it is also used as an interjection or exclamation expressive of hope of things to come. See Cudlow on Scruples.

would fain attach an idea of which they have no idea,\* did also in its original intent symbolize or represent, numerically, that mathematical egg, so to speak, which contains all possible modification of number.

For, in consideration of the faculties of the human mind:—the mystery of idea:—the study of PRINCIPLE:—and the nature of UNITY more especially; with the full conviction of not only the indistinctness, and unsatisfactory nature, but the absolute and undeniable uncertainty of Algebraical demonstration; when we find it impossible to portray any definite distinction, between our ideas of non-existence, or nothing, and those of unlimited existence, or infinity;—the proposition meets with but little natural resistance from our capacity,—that, in truth our dimly pictured *nothing* is, (as near as we can conceive, by means of our present faculties), as of everything else, so the Great Father and Mother of Number: and as of unity, or itself: so the ovarium and source of all future spermatations, families, or possible aggregates of units, or Number.†

It remained, however, for a comparatively late period in the world's history, to witness the exantlation of a doc-

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\* See Bonnycastle and others.

† ἔδῃ γίνεται, ὅ, τι μὴ καὶ πρόσθεν ἦν.—Hippoc.

I conceive the remark, which has been attributed to Lady Mary Colton, with reference to Mr. Babbage's Machine being assimilated to a church, to be anything but blasphemous, as some weak, not to say malevolent parties have asserted.



trine, which had become buried in obscurity, heaped upon it by the ingenuity of priestcraft, and the fables of poetry : namely, the sexual properties of numerical fact, so beautifully illustrated and portrayed by the gamic torches, if I may be allowed such an expression of the Multiplication Table.\*

For the more pleasing instruction of my hearers, and as the means of impressing more strongly the truth of the doctrine upon their youthful minds, I constructed a moveable picture of the Multiplication Table : wherein the multipliers being dressed in male Arabian costume, and the multiplicands in female, and all being set forth in bridal array ; having caused them to dance a Courant in the air for several minutes, to music performed on a small species of Apollonicon which I had provided for the purpose ; the multipliers and multiplicands passed through the Mahometan ceremony of marriage, accompanied by friends, relations, slaves, and music.

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\* Pythagoras discovered masculine virtues in odd numbers. Even numbers were considered imperfect and female by the Samian Sage. The causes, however, which led this philosopher into these, and other indecent errors, with reference to numbers, were derived from the opinions of Zarates ; who though the master of so great a man as Pythagoras, was himself, according to very creditable testimony, " a monster in private, who performed the part of an amiable booby in public life."

See "Annotations on Plutarch, by a Member of the College of Physicians." "Ireland revisited, or the Tables turned."

The groups of figures, then, disappearing upon camels in different directions, I introduced an Arab Magician: who, by the recital of incantation, and the performance of several mystic ceremonies, produced a second aerial picture, as it were, out of the shadows of the first, in which the figures had become multiplied *ad infinitum*.

The original patriarchal simples 2, 3, 4, and 5, &c. were still seen in different parts of the picture, with venerable countenances and lengthened beards promoting marriages and multiplication; their children, now, with their children's children, having become compound Terms, and Factors, dressed in the robes of Caliphs and of Princesses, were busy in promoting polygamy and mirth, in every direction;—when suddenly, in the corner of the picture, the attention of the groups of figures seemed to be particularly excited by the approach of a procession of Camels, who appeared, as it were, emerging from the distance.

Coming nearer and nearer, the procession at length halted: when, from the pageant, issued a nurse, dressed in white, bearing the infant year, in which I then gratefully existed, produced by the marriage of the Princess Nine Hundred and One, with the ancient and wealthy patriarch Two.

Considerable applause followed the removal of the numerical picture: when, now, having exhibited a few allegorical models of still born errors, in glass jars illu-



minated by phosphorus,\* I proceeded to represent a "Monstrous Fact:" i. e. a fact, owing its birth to the incestuous union of two or more facts, of kin too near, or of species too incongruous. As the Parent Male Facts, or Principles, I had selected Knowledge and Ignorance: as the Parent Female Principle—I chose Superstition.

Knowledge was personated by the figure of Dr. Johnson: Ignorance, by a male representation, with manhood's stature and features, of the County of Essex, in long petticoats. While the Parent Female,—Superstition, was represented by a moveable figure of the celebrated Mrs. Thompson.†

Setting these luminous shadows in motion, I caused them to ascend three small thrones, or chairs, where they superintended the catechizing, whipping, and physicking, of an extensive charity-school.

\* Such as—The South Sea Speculation.—An Attempt at Civilizing the Army and Navy.—An Attempt at introducing the Malaria Fever into the Workhouse of the Parish of St. Mary-le-bone.—Four hundred and sixteen systems of Ethics, in sour crout, rendered phosphorescent with a distillation from putrid tears.—Attempt to establish a Metropolitico-statistical Association, for filtering, measuring, analysing, and restoring the contents of the principal sewers of London, for the use of the poor.—&c. &c.

† "When Julia Thompson in her bright array  
Scorned the fair triumph of her Freedom's day:" &c. &c.

But I need not remind my readers of such well known lines.



Introducing then the shadows of some placards, wherein were briefly mentioned, in large letters, allusions to certain gossip, concerning an ATROCIOUS FAUX PAS among the parties—I contrived, that these should be quickly followed by a picture, in the air, of the Monstrous Fact: which was an irregularly formed, and enormous, transparent, dark blue, naked, Baby, sitting crosslegged, upon a sack of Embden Groats, cursing and swearing, and throwing about religious tracts.

To my astonishment, the allegory was received with one universal shriek! “Mrs. Earlygrave! Oh, Dear Mrs. Earlygrave!” was screamed from one end of the apartment to the other! Rushing from their seats: Lady Barnaby, Lady Grogram, and Mrs. Mirsk, with five other elderly ladies, whose names I did not know, and scrambling over the partition, which separated me and my apparatus from the rest of the room:—screaming, shouting, weeping, swearing:—they seized portions of my machinery and dashed them in pieces! Lady Barnaby, aiming a blow at me with one of my large slides, slipped up, unfortunately, and falling back into a large pan of hot charcoal, ignited a quantity of quick fire mixed with assafœtida, which I had prepared for a future illusion! This, reduplicating the alarm and amazement, and setting fire to my proscenium, broke and put out the few lighted lamps which there were, filling the apartment with insufferable smoke and stench; when suddenly, amid the falling proscenium and scaffoldings,—

the screams of the young ladies escaping through the smashed windows of the conservatory,—and, indeed, in the midst of my own alarm concerning the quickly igniting walls of the room,—I was accosted, by name, by a hurried voice from behind me !

It was Mrs. Gurley !

“Escape, Mr. Gasker,” she said, “escape ! your life is in danger !”

“But these Ladies !” said I, pointing to Lady Barnaby, Lady Grogram, and her associates, who had now fainted, overpowered by the smoke, &c., on the floor !

“They will be safe,” she said, “they will be safe—but you have no moment to lose.” Then, hurrying me to the window at the back :—down the steps :—into the road :—and incontinently, [refusing to listen to an instant’s remonstrance,] into her gig, which was standing ready in the road, she drove me furiously away ;—while scarcely crediting my own consciousness,—now thinking of myself, now of Mrs. Gurley, now of the apparatus and machinery, and now looking back towards the flaming lecture-room : we were whirled in the direction of London !

It is now five and thirty years since the occurrence of this event. Were I inclined to do so, I might relate a hundred more such events ; similar circumstances of inconvenience and annoyance, in which I have been placed, by my desire of imparting to mankind portions of Truth !



It is time, however, that the thread of this narrative should be winding near its end. The design, with which it was commenced, I consider, to be accomplished; and I, therefore, close it here; at the commencement, as it were, of my former publicity: at the outset of a career, which I experimented in this country some years ago, but which I deemed it expedient to close for a time, in order to wait for a more opportune state of the public mind, for the reception of my Philosophy.

I saw, though not from the heights of Carmel, the small cloud long ago. And when I mentioned to Mr. Tooke, at Croydon, my intention of secluding myself for a time, and of withdrawing, for a few years, my attempt at carrying out my design: he said, with his usual frankness and good sense, "Let them dine first, Gasker, then push the bottle round." I saw him smile as we went out into the garden.

I now, therefore, beg to inform the world that Athanasius Gasker is *not* dead! That the pictures of his tomb at Syracuse, published in London in the year 1820, were executed and sent forth by Athanasius Gasker himself! That the Greek epitaph, published in the Times, as copied, by a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, from my monument: and, which the ostentatious world, ever ready to praise worth departed, never willing to promote worth in life, fain affected to admire, was copied by me from a schoolmaster's tombstone at Godalming, in Surrey! That the rewards offered for my



skull at Vienna were offered by me ! That the Pantaloons, now in the possession of a Dignitary of the Church of England, and which are placed in his drawing-room, with an inscription\* affixed, in a glass case, were the Pantaloons of my own Valet, sent by me to that weak man !

I beg to inform the Church that "THE MONSTER" still lives !

I tell England's philosophy—her hour is come ! I weep for the poor Pope ! And I can see the grey light of Freedom's morn along the hills of Spain !

Joy to the Jews ! and Russia pays the expense ! But England ! ah ! hadst thou known, twenty years ago, what now thou wilt shortly know, Gasker had been made welcome here !

When the Allied Sovereigns visited this country, I was secluded by necessity in the cellar of a deserted mansion in Yorkshire ; and it was out of my power to act as I had intended.

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\* The inscription is as follows :—

"THESE  
are the  
PANTALOONS OF ATHANASIUS GASKER,  
the notorious  
MONSTER,  
who died mad at Syracuse,  
April 3rd, 1818."

I dined with this person, as Mr. Belzoni the traveller, for the purpose of witnessing this singular whim.

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I studiously watched the effect of the recognition of Columbia and Mexico ; and the Merchants of London comprehended the remarks which I sent forth from my retirement.

I now, however, give warning to the British public, who will ere long catch the echo of a louder cry proclaimed through the States of America, that a heavy hand is above them !

I remind England's literature—from her prattling Reviewer, up to the bush-wigged compiler of her most learned and more stupid octavos : I remind these foolish men of 1809 ! Should they understand me—Well. Should they not : I shall enter into no explanation.

But : Ye men of England ! I LIVE ! Yes—the “ Old Blue Baby ! ” “ the old plethoric and wanton star ! ”

And, whether it was of any importance, in 1808, that I had traversed the world's surface, of land and sea, in quest of those truths wherewith I commenced the out-works of my Great System : whether common respect was, or was not due to him, who had trituated the earth's crust, in order to obtain a spark whereby to light his faithful lamp : No matter. I am ALIVE ! and, individually, I tell thee thou “ Royal Navy,” I was witness to the tremendous eruption of Mount Tomboro, in the island of Sumbawa, in 1815, the explosions of which were heard at the distance of 900 miles ; and, while out of a population of 12,000, only twenty-six individuals re-

mained on the island to tell the tale : and while animals and men and trees were whirled into the air,—that air being darkened by ashes to a distance of 300 miles from the spot :—I was seated, for three successive days, in my hat, out at sea, upon the floating cinders, contemplating that singular scene !”\*

I tell you, ye “Soldiers,” I have contended with Cranes on the banks of the Scamander, with no weapon of defence but an old cotton umbrella, and I have stood victorious there, among the air-ward bound !

I tell you, ye “Doctors”—(the most ignorant, if not the worst of men)—Ye who would fain despise all Truth, while ye would lavish guineas for one of her secrets :—Mark me, Gentlemen ; while I tell ye ; (what ye will not believe, no matter, ye will anon,†) I am known in all the principal Catacombs of Syria, Egypt, Italy, and Greece ! And, I have been vocally accompanied by every sad inmate there, as I played ancient national airs upon my Galvanic Bellows !‡

Ye “Priests,” ye amiable, but misguided men ! I tell ye, I have waltzed with Night-Mares in the Temples of Elora ! Aye, and I have made grimaces at my own

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\* The pendulum was slightly affected : the magnet a little : the monometer not at all.

† . . . . . Sums, I am informed, have been already offered for the building now called the College of Physicians, by the proprietors of several neighbouring Hotels.

‡ Mr. Cross, probably, would have no recollection of me now.



reflection in the Lago del Tolfilo, until, affected by the miasma of that remarkable pool, I thought myself in earnest !

Law—thou wast my Father's calling—my Father was an honest man !

Time, however, is wasted in trifling intimations. And the developement of my System, which the ensuing volumes of this Library will contain, must speak for itself, and for the merits of my labours.

Should that System fail to meet the approbation of this Age, it is I who have miscalculated the moral manifestations of the Times. Should it succeed, and should England once again be young, under the influence of its modest observances, human applause will not be needed, to eke out a fulness in the cup of



ATHANASIUS GASKER.

#### ERRATA.

Page 5, line 3, *for* " condition " *read* " conditions."  
23, 7, *for* " *inertd* " *read* " *inerte*."



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PART II. will contain  
"THE NATURE AND CONDITIONS OF TRUTH."





1. The first of the three is the "The Tale of the







